



St Hugh's Catholic Primary School Historical Association Quality Mark Report

Silver award granted 10th November 2016

Context:

St. Hugh's is a smaller than average, Catholic primary school in the centre of Liverpool where almost all children are from minority ethnic backgrounds with an accompanying very high proportion of children with English as an additional language. There are high levels of pupil mobility with many children not speaking English when they arrive at the school. The proportion of children in receipt of pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average. In all of the above respects the teaching of history presents many challenges to the staff across the school.

Teaching and Learning

The teaching of history at the school is consistently good across all year groups.1.2 The curriculum is highly responsive to the learning needs of the children with a wide variety of strategies used to enable the children to access the subject. Teachers are animated and are very effective at making cross-curricular links to reinforce the subject. In a Y1 class children were exploring change through a study of the school buildings and groups were working with a teaching assistant using tablets to record current pictures of the school to compare to pictures taken in the past.1.4 All staff have a very clear planning focus on the historical skills, concepts and processes and use these in setting the learning in lessons and for framing subject specific feedback. For example, in a Y5 class the learning was for children to understand the priorities of invaders and settlers and the reasons for their decisions. In response to one child the teacher posed an additional question which the child then proceeded to answer below, thereby improving the quality of their answer. This understanding is so embedded in the school that some supply teachers are able to respond to children's work as effectively as the full-time staff. The deployment of resources including TA's is very good and targeted at the needs of the children. Learning is very active in all year groups.1.4 In one KS2 lesson in the WOW room the class had used a wide range of materials to construct a variety of prehistoric shelters which they were evaluating against a range of criteria. Responses from children indicated that these lessons were the norm. One child commented that teachers "made learning fun and exciting" while another said that teachers "gave them loads of activities". Marking and feedback is consistently strong across all years underpinned by a clear understanding of progression amongst all staff. History lessons have a subject specific learning focus and feedback from the teachers is always given in direct relation to the history learning. In many cases children respond to development points made by teachers with a comment or some additional work. One Y5 child commented that his teacher "writes inspirational stuff in our book". The school trialled an assessment and tracking approach to the subject last year but felt it did not deliver what they wanted and they are currently investigating other approaches.

Curriculum

The curriculum is very well planned on a number of levels. Firstly, it is very much a response to the needs of the children in terms of the content selected.3.1 The lack of English as a first language among many pupils has led to all staff developing close links with support teachers to identify content and vocabulary appropriate to the children. The school has made great efforts to meet the needs of the many Roma children at the school. A Roma week is organised in June and involves external support through a storyteller and dance to explore aspects of Roma culture and history. The school follows the national curriculum but includes content that is more unusual such as a wide range of explorers in KS1 including Ibn Battuta, Columbus, Neil Armstrong and Edmund Hillary. In Y6 the children study crime and punishment from ancient Rome to the present with a focus on change over time. The above curriculum is underpinned by a very coherent and well thought-out progression document which sets out the pitch and expectations for the subject for KS1, lower KS2 and upper KS2 in terms of the concepts, processes and skills. Individual class teachers have freedom to select the content focus in the form of an investigation from within the curriculum and then plan the work in accordance with the progression requirements. As a consequence, the understanding and progression of children is constantly in focus. Whilst the curriculum deals strongly with British and world history, the local history element is in need of further development 3.5.

Achievement

Understanding of progression is well understood by all staff and all history planning develops from this point. Medium term plans are pitched appropriately and individual lessons and sequences of lessons are clearly focused on history specific learning. This leads to very focused and precise feedback on history work. 4.2 Children's work is displayed in classrooms and around the school, such as on the outdoor timeline situated on a wall in the playground.

Leadership

History has a high status in the school and is seen by senior leaders and all staff as a good vehicle to deliver cross-curricular learning. The co-ordinator is a highly valued member of staff who has supported the development of the subject to its present position very effectively. 2.4 She regularly attends local network meetings and is given scheduled opportunities to then feed back to staff at staff meetings soon after the course. Following each topic there is a structured evaluation session between each teacher and the coordinator which has led to a range of further developments taking place. 2.4 The systems set up by senior leaders allow for a process of continual monitoring and evaluation to take place between the coordinator and teaching staff that leads to on-going improvements in the teaching of the subject. The coordinator is currently on maternity leave but appropriate arrangements are in place where the deputy head is supporting the continuing work in history.

Enrichment

All staff and senior leaders were very clear that history provides a very good context for linking with other subjects with strong connections to design and technology and literacy. In interviews with children they were very aware of these cross-curricular links, one child said that "we use other lessons like art and D&T in our history ". 5.1 Staff were aware that in order to make the content accessible developing a very active approach and using a variety of resources was essential to help overcome the children's language development. A number of trips have taken place such as to the cells in St George's Hall in Liverpool, Tatton Park and to Chester. History also makes significant contributions to the culture weeks and the recent Roma week that the school has organised. The school has worked extremely hard to reach parents and engage them in their children's' learning. Time spent on these has been in addition to the regular subject time. Classrooms are lively learning environments and the WOW room with its multi-media facilities provides an exceptionally rich facility for learning.

Other

The school, and particularly the coordinator, have the capacity and drive to continue to move forward in the further development of the subject. The work currently underway on the tracking system needs to be continued to provide a summary view of progression across the school. Work on the local area could also be further developed. The school has rightly concentrated on a curriculum reflecting the cultures of the children, and also a rich British and world dimension to the curriculum leaving the local area a little underdeveloped. Development of this would provide a better balance of history across the school and enrich the children's understanding of their locality. The school could then further develop the history presence on the school website to celebrate their considerable achievements in gaining the Quality Mark.

Final Comments:

The assessor was impressed with the coherent approach to the planning and teaching of history throughout the school taking into account the challenges posed by the learning needs of the children. Staff were unanimous that this posed a challenge to them which had manifested itself in a highly active and practical approach to the subject which engaged the children. All of this was underpinned by clear minded guidance from senior leaders and a commitment on the part of the coordinator to put in place systems and structures to support and respond to the needs of all staff to teach the subject throughout the school.

Children's views on the purpose of history were illuminating and ranged from the practical "to become an archaeologist" or "you need it for secondary school", through the enjoyment "we have so much fun in the WOW room" to the more philosophical "people in the past left something for us we can learn from and we can leave something for the next generations".